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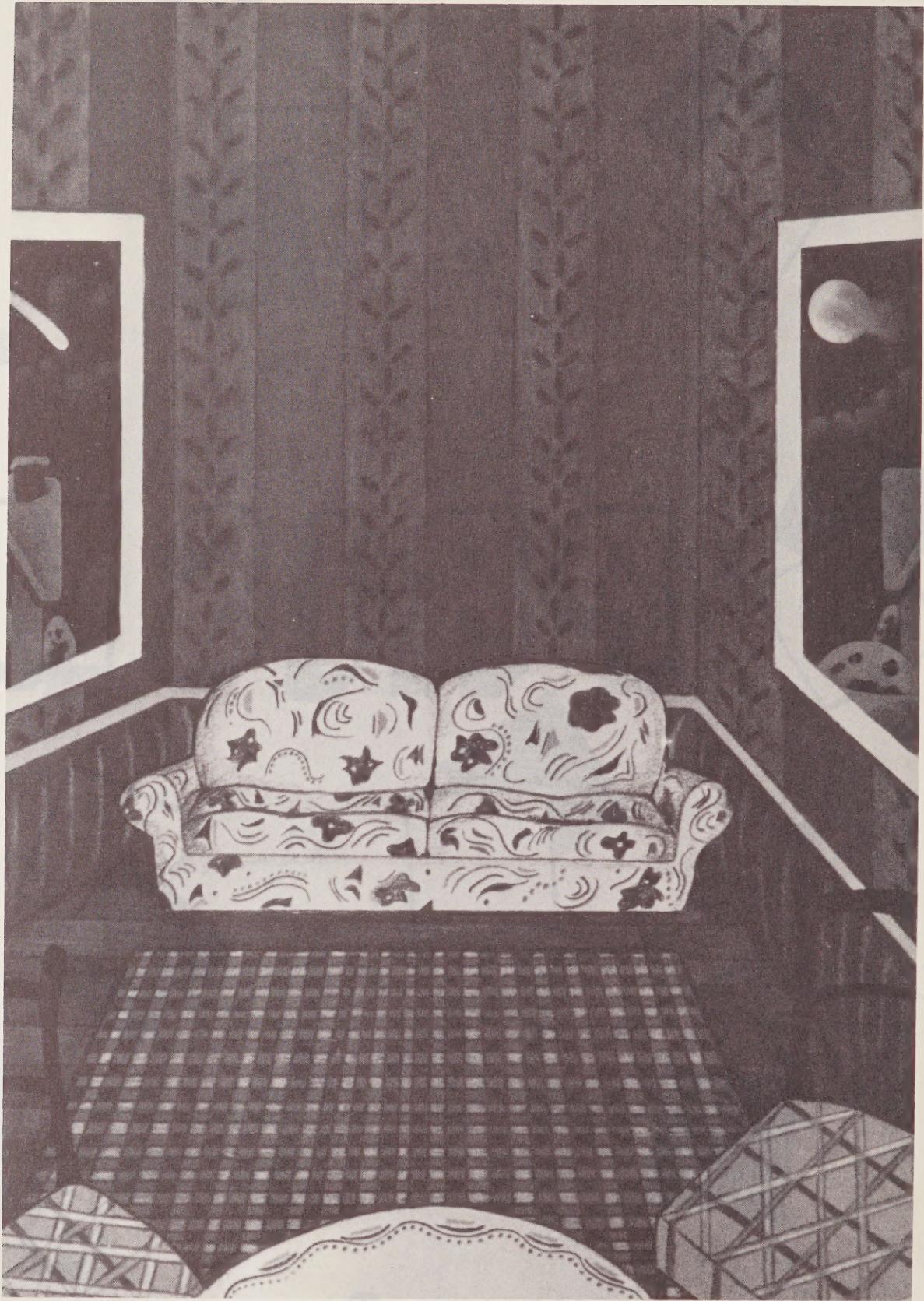


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PRISM

'87



Interior - April Jones

1987 WINNERS

Poetry

1. Celeste Penny Poetry Award -
Amy McLaughlin - "A Sunday March Morning"
2. Editor's Choice -
Jo-elle Brown - "Naked Truth"
3. Honorable Mention -
Lisa Mickshutz - "I Got Up and Went Dancin"

Prose

1. Elizabeth Taylor Gibson Prose Award -
Cindy Morgan - "Lost Sheep"
2. Honorable Mention -
Kathleen Somers - "Remember When We Met"
3. Honorable Mention -
Melanie Bowen - "The Fish"



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Artists

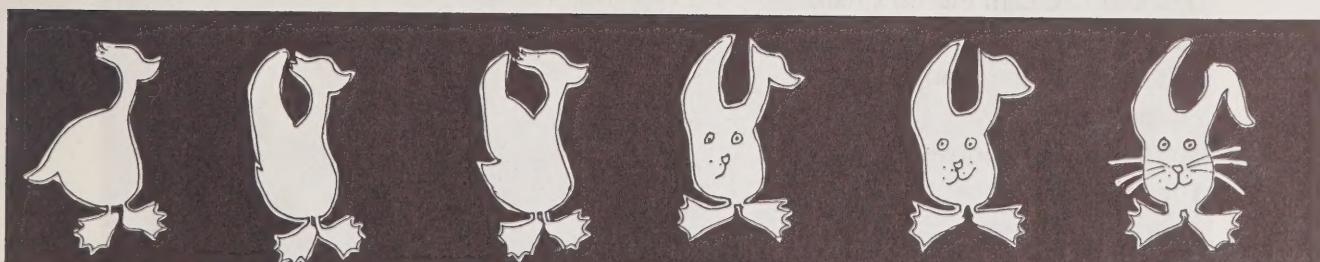
April Jones	Jenny Steele
Kim Keeling	Jane Hill
Tammy Taylor	Peggy Medlin
Tammy Raynor - Title Page	Miriam Johnston - Cover

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Editor:	Tammy Taylor
Co-Editor:	Donna Anderson
Advisor:	Dr. Jean Bauso
Art-Advisor:	Carolyn Parker

Judges

Ms. Lori Park
Ms. Carolyn Parker
Mr. James Smith



Metamorphosis - Liz Henderson

A Sunday March Morning

Amy McLaughlin

A Sunday March morning —
Sun glares through dusty blinds,
Restricting my eyesight.
Wind seeps through cracked window,
Rippling morning paper.
I read comics while I wait
For eggs, orange juice, and Miss Smith's strawberry jellyroll.
Dad laughs
As Mom tickles the hairs on the back of his neck.

Distant gunshot
And then again —
Stillness.
Uncertainty, alarm, then panic —
My heart pounds, a rhythmic drum.
Dad and I race to the door,
Throw open the screen and
Bolt toward the distant backyard barn,
Layers of pebble feel like smooth sand under numb feet.

We race on,
Each step, longer,
Slower,
Than the one before.
To the left, the timeworn tractor
I rode with my uncle
When I was young and curious,
His calloused hands
Anchoring my short legs.
To the right, rusty steel scales
He used to weigh sacks of cotton,
My brothers and I once picked.
Leaning against the barn fence,
A slender fishing rod —
Fourth of July at Palmer Pond,
Catching a five-pound catfish,
Uncle Martin's arm around my waist,
Clasping my rod.

Scents of straw and sweat
Choke me.
Dad and I scream Martin's name.
No answer.
Dad leaps up the crooked ladder
To the loft,
Stretching long unused muscles.
Then his face drops,
To a
Ruined hope.

I whip up wooden steps,
And stand frozen behind my father.
Unable to focus my eyes
I see with blurred vision —
Blood stagnant like old glue
Clinging to his face like an antique painting.
Mouth torn like ripped cloth,
Skin hanging like sliced thread.
Faded blue overalls,
Their plaid patches
Now stained —
Forever.



I Got Up and Went Dancin

Lisa Mickschutz

It was a long time—a long
long
time ago
that I dreamed.
And sat right here.
And his breath came whistlin for me on a steamin-june evenin.
Whistlin a tune so high—
so sweet—
my fresh brown fingers quaked and my nyloned knees shivered
for sight of him.

And so I got up and went dancin.
I danced right off this porch and down that dusty-dry-path—
kickin up earth and ash all the way.
Leavin Mama settin on the porch with hardly a toss of my hand
to wave goodbye.

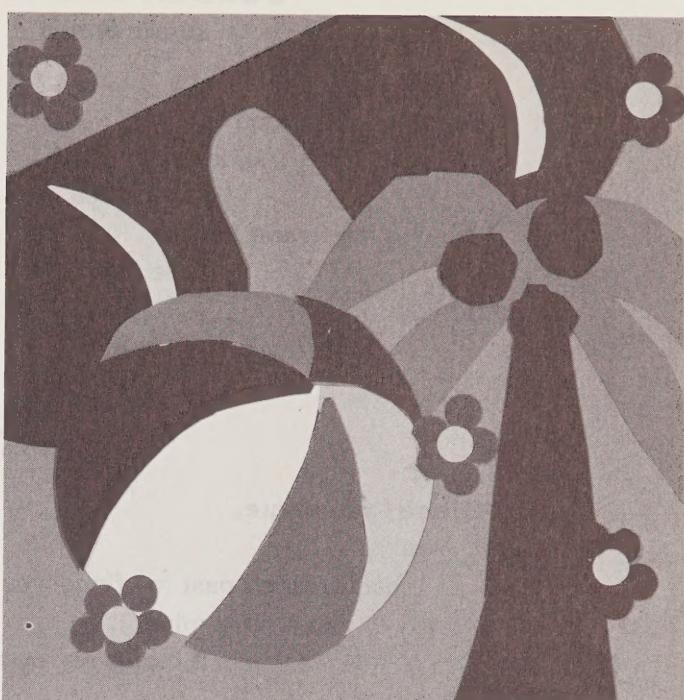
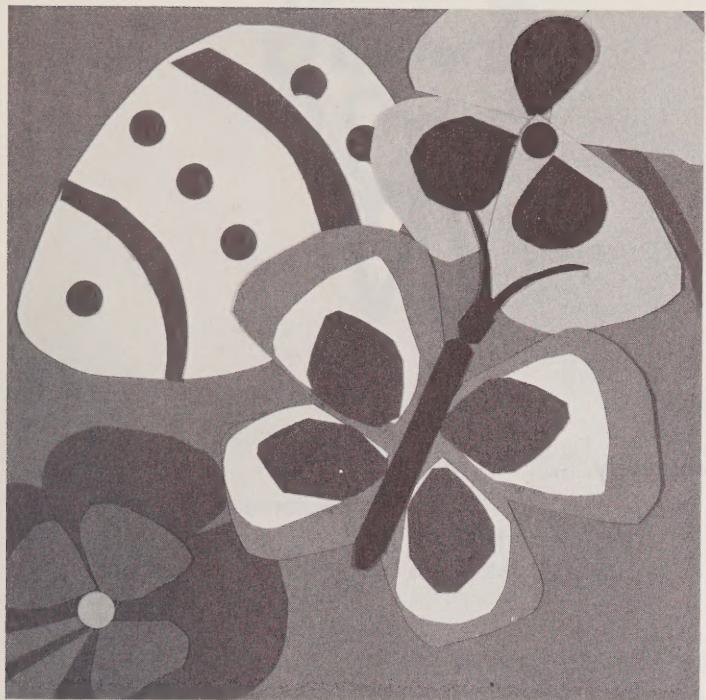
But in a little while—
his tune dried out.
And September came and blew my dance away.

And so I shuffled back down that
sticky mud road—
and climbed back on this porch.
Mama still rockin.
I started cryin.
And I been rockin and cryin
and whistlin a quiet tune ever since.

APRIL DAYGLOW

Lisa Mickschutz

Cradled in the comforting embrace
Of century-old white columns,
I watch Seventh-day sunbeams
Tickle the lazy grass with golden fingers.
Scattered under sprawling boughs
Of blossoming magnolia,
Pages and paper,
Shuffle in the earth's breezy slumber.
Gossiping girls lounge on blankets and benches,
Whispering, singing of weekend adventures.
Smooth warm bricks
Run on curving paths,
Binding us together,
Yet leading us outward toward new lives.
At the crossroads,
Beads of rippling water trickle and splash,
Echoing from the rustic iron fountain—
The lifeflow of Peace.

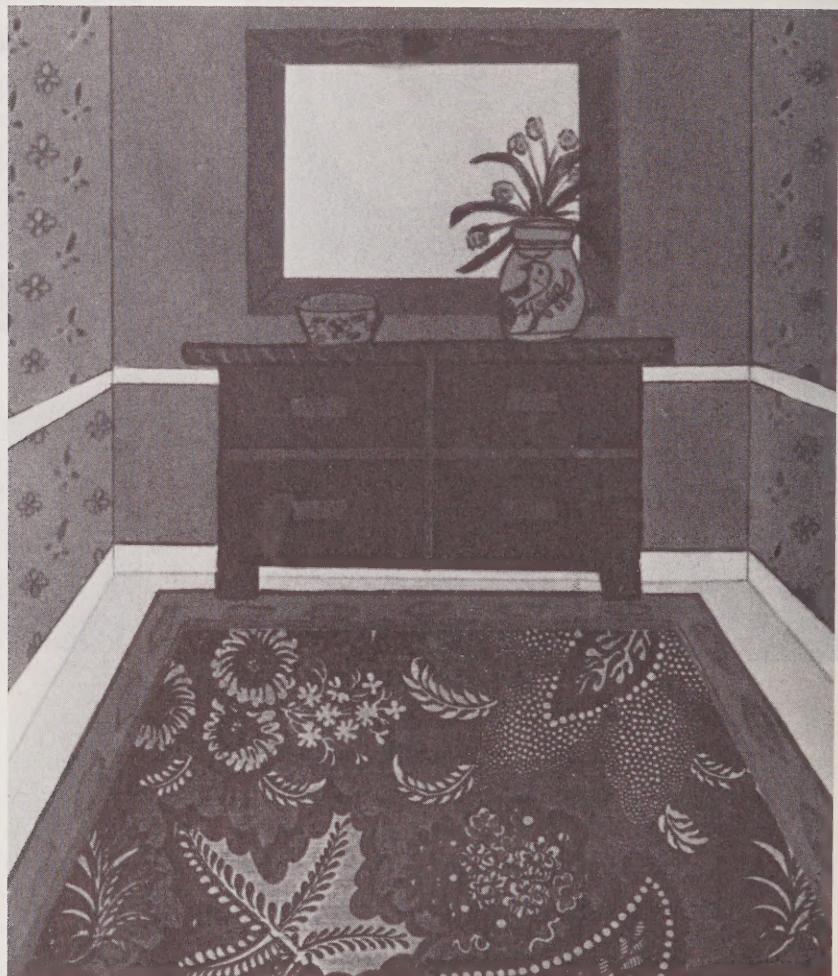


Tammy Taylor

SUDDEN VACANCY

Jo-elle Brown

Watching the moon
slide
into the sea,
Leaving the loving hands
of the sky.
So you
slid through my grasp
slippery
quickly
completely.
Before I was aware,
You
had brushed past my fingertips
in a hazy mist;
It clings on my horizon.



Interior - Peggy Medlin



Naked Truth

Jo-elle Brown

Shamefully,
you shove the images
into a mental closet:

Staring
desperately
at the General Electric red digital numbers
knowing that—please, God—when
only 5 more minutes have
ticked off,
it will be done.

Silent
tears
stream over your face

Aware
that even a whimper
could summon the heavy hand
to strike
or strangle.

You are stripped of pride
as well as clothing.

You doubt your God
your sanity
your ability to cope.

You burn
with a new pain
As your fourteen-year-old mind
is slapped with the knowledge that

Sex
is no fairy tale,
Love
was not made here.

LOST SHEEP

Cyndi Morgan

We sit at the big wooden kitchen table facing one another: she, the mirror image of myself at the same age, yet sadder, more solemn, and tight-lipped.

The wind waves the curtains in the window beside the table, and the breeze is all there is between us. It is a peaceful summer day outside, and no one is counting on us for anything. This is my home in the country, a three-room, hundred-year-old house set on piles of rocks in each corner, with a green tin roof; yet it might as well be a castle with flags and trumpeteers telling the world the maiden inside is free!!

Attaining that freedom has been no easy task for a first-born daughter raised properly and possessively. Not truly prepared for life in the big world, it has taken me three stormy years to claim the title "Free spirit," and there is quite a bit of pride involved here. Yet right now a banner proclaiming my adult responsibility sits across the table — rather unresponsive.

When you are alone, you will often hear echoes from your past, and my parent's urgings to help others had survived the tumult of cutting "the strings." So I had enlisted in a program to be the Big Sister of some needy young girl. They had sent me Teresa. I have been to her home. She has taken me into her room, a secluded haven where her walls know her better than anyone. I have met with her stepmother, and she trusts me with her stepdaughter — or she is simply desperate.

Teresa's real mother left her when she was five. No goodbye, no hug, no kiss, just gone, thin air. Teresa has grown sadder every year since. With the remarriage of her father this year, her melancholy has consumed all her desire to communicate, and she cannot bring herself to speak to this new woman-invader. So her parents signed her up for this program, hoping a young adult could reach inside and help release the pressure of her sadness.

It was quite a jolt when I first laid eyes on her. She is the same build as I, with the same facial shape, eyes, and haircut that I had at that age. Facing an image of the past, I had decided, perhaps unconsciously, that she must be just like I was inside at that age also, and I would treat her accordingly.

I will probe and poke at the fire smoldering behind those ashen eyes, and maybe she will be a whole person again, and I will add her to my resume.

Teresa is in a somber mood, more than usual today. She has her head cradled in her arms on the table as I address the crown of her head. "You know, Teresa, you really can tell me anything. What's on your mind today? If you talk about it, you'll feel better; people will like you more if you're happy." Her feet sweep the floor under the table and her fingers drum nervously on her arm.

"Come on Teresa, forget the past."

No response except for "I'm thirsty," muffled by her hair falling in her face. My chair scrapes the floor annoyingly as I get up to get her some juice. Raising the jug of unfiltered cider, I realize how tiresome the relationship is becoming.

Saving someone is much harder than I had counted on and so inconvenient! My boyfriend and I have taken Teresa on numerous outings to the amusement park and the art museum; we have taken her swimming in a country pond and hiking in the woods — all for nothing. My life is beginning to be bound by the handcuffs of her unhappiness, for she is still a shadow of sadness, always in the corner of my eye like an eyelash turned wrong.

The noise inside my head is too much a contrast to the singing summer day outside. Bird opera is happening out there, and cricket and butterfly ballet — and here we sit inside having psychotherapy! Glancing out at a corner of the porch, I notice that it is time to burn the garbage before the

animals tear into it. Pushing the screen door open, I motion for Teresa to follow me. I point her to a large bag and grab one myself, and we drag them across the yard with my fluffy dog, Dumplin', leaping at our elbows with joy to have company outside. The garbage pit is located 100 feet from the house in a lightly wooded area. It is a huge gaping hole that was here when I moved in.

We dump everything in, and Teresa watches as I rake surrounding sticks and leaves into the pit. Since it is a bit damp, I go back up to the house to get some kerosene. When I return, Teresa is sitting facing the watermelon field with a faraway look in her eyes, as though she is remembering a scene from her past. She stands up quickly and moves back as the kerosene is sloshed into the pit. Lighting a long piece of rag seems to be the safest way to start the fire, and even with the kerosene it is slow to catch.

Soon enough, however, small pieces begin to burn, turning blue, green, and purple, until the fire has quivered and now rages alive with an urgency, yellow and orange. We stand transfixed, our cheeks becoming hot with the heat, almost paralyzed without knowing why. The spell is broken, however, with the sudden realization that this ethereal substance is beginning to have a mind of its own. With terror in her eyes, Teresa pushes me, and we both head for the hose and water bucket on the porch.

The fire is spreading, dancing at our feet like a smirky child in need of discipline. There is no opera, no ballet, but a droning, dizzying slow motion enveloping us now. Fighting the fire, we are of a single mind: a weight is pressing against my chest as Teresa's pain invades the chambers of my heart; she looks up at me and slowly the icicle eyes begin to melt. She knows I am beginning to understand.

We both are jolted back into the moment as we hear sirens wailing like newborns and see a line of pick-up trucks speeding down the road heading for us, signaling connection with the world. Someone is coming, someone is caring — fifteen trucks in all, full of civic-minded tobacco farmers, called away on this perfect Sunday to erase my mistake. Facing their haughty jeers is a humbling experience. They have no idea what has occurred here today. Neither do I really, yet everything feels different. Before Teresa and I have a chance to communicate, a car pulls into the driveway unannounced by sirens.

Two ladies get out. It is my mother and my sister Rose on the way to see my grandma, stopping in for a surprise visit. As I go to give my mother a hug and try to explain what is going on, Teresa lets a searing cry fly from her mouth which cuts into my heart like a knife. "AAAAAAAAAAAAA AAMMMMAAAAAMAMAMAMAMAMAMAMA-MAMAMAMAMAMAMA." Seeing me hug my mother is more than she can take; now she is running across the watermelon field as hard as she can go. I run after her and watch as she falls face down into the soft grey dirt laced with green vines and yellow blossoms. She is crying, and she holds the field like it is her mother's breast. Quietly I sit down beside her and listen to her sobs and watch this baby wanting only love from a mother who could not give it.

Finally spent, with no tears left, she sits up, and we put our arms around each other and head back to the house. Everyone has gone now; we don't have to face a question-and-answer session. "How considerate and respectful," I think to myself.

I am so relieved to be in the car with Teresa and driving away from the whole scene. We play the radio and watch the clouds roll in with the evening on their backs. As we approach her home, I sense she is glad to be here, and I wish I

could stay. As she gets out of the car, she turns back and looks deeply into my eyes and smiles. I feel a wave of respect for this child sweep over me and feel that I am the little one, and she the Big Sister. We shake hands for an instant, and

she turns up the walk. I sense this will be the last time we see each other. I am hoping that she won't tell her stepmother what happened today — and knowing that she will.



Self-Portrait - (Oil) Tammy Taylor

TRIAL OF LOVE

Merri Amos

He entered my courtroom
His quivering voice struggling for words
His eyes drooped with sorrow —
 Guilt was certain.
“I’m sorry” began his opening statement.
He pled guilty to my charges
But proceeded to defend himself.
I listened, objectively,
Keeping in mind the crime that had been committed.
He concluded his case,
Begging for mercy of the court
And praying for a light sentence.
I thought of the criminal —
 Until then, he had a clean record.
But lying is a serious crime in the world of love —
 One lie sometimes leads to others.
My head, being con,
Struggled for a fair verdict.
After a long debate,
My head sent the word “guilty” to my tongue
And I placed him on probation.



Self-Portrait - Kim Keeling

DOUBLE KNOCKOUT

Merri Amos

We approached the ring,
Glaring eye to eye.
From opposite corners,
We both received last minute advice
Before the first round bell sounded.
We came from out corners;
Ready to defend,
But anxious to put up our own battle.
One blow hit me below the belt,
Knocking me breathless.
My guard was strong enough to fight back,
Ignoring the pain lingering in my heart.
My strength continued to grow
As I fired a punch.
Down to the floor he landed —
It looked as if the fight was over.
To my surprise,
He found more ammunition
And punches continued to fly —
Back and forth, one was beating the other
Leaving one with nothing to fight back.
As the words grew more powerful,
Our defense weakened.

Both of us tired and out of breath,
The fight ended with a double knockout.
No one got the title,
No one was a champion.
In opposite corners,
We left the ring —
Our bodies sore,
Our hearts in pain.
The fight was over and neither had won.
All that was accomplished was loneliness —
Love had turned to hate.
Now we are alone
With nothing but the showdown of words
And scars to remember.

THE TICKING OF TIME

Amy McLaughlin

I.

I remember:

...The sting of a spanking
I received after church one Sabbath
For grabbing an old lady's pocketbook
During prayer.
...Carolina Beach
Uneven sandcastles,
Hopscotch on the boardwalk,
All-day Putt-Putt,
And hanging on to Dad's arm while swimming
Pulling him down,
So my toes would not touch
The mushy earth below.
...The juicy sweetness of a Hershey bar,
Mom gave me for not crying
While she washed my hair.
...Warmth of Christmas:
Mom's pecan pie,
Hot apple cider,
Scent of pine,
Scratchy sound of my sister singing
"Up on the Housetop."
...My first piano recital:
Eight years old
Back straight,
Fingers frigid,
I looked up from the keyboard
And saw
Mom and Dad, hand in hand,
Their eyes
Glistening.
...Friday night "Family Time":
Munching hot-buttered popcorn,
Watching "Little House on the Prairie,"
Snuggling together under aged quilts.

Yesterday

Seems but a
Blink away.

II.

How did we get from
There
To
Here
In such a short time?

We live by days,
months,
years,
While time carves our lives.
Wrinkles shape the eyes.
Brown spots speck the hands.
Gray invades natural chestnut, sandy, auburn.
I ask:
“Where have those thousands of minutes dissolved?”
And a stronger, more frightening question:
“Did I use each minute to the sixtieth second?”



Collage - April Jones



Self-Portrait - April Jones



Self-Portrait - (Pencil) Tammy Taylor



"Cherie" - April Jones

REMEMBER WHEN WE MET?

Kathleen Somers

The temperature was a record high 85 % in Wilmington as I waited, not knowing whether the hot autumn sun or burning nerves were making the perspiration roll off of my sunburned face. I hadn't seen David since our summer at Governor's School over a year ago. The school is designed for gifted high school sophomores and juniors, to expend their knowledge of a particular study. Because we were studying in different subjects, (his math, mine art), we didn't even meet each other until the final two weeks. Trying to recollect what I was wearing the first time we met, my brain switched from "clothing file" to trying to recapture the "David captions." I remembered his blond hair, smooth fair skin, and perfectly pointed nose. I had known he was of Swedish background the first time I noticed him; the only part that didn't qualify him as a Lars or Olaf were his big hazel eyes, disturbing to a Swede, but melting to me. But because the artistic mind can create illusions, I got a tattered photo out of my wallet, which I keep handy for a lonely night nostalgia kick, to spy on my own created visions. Happily David's photo mirrored my vision perfectly.

After an exchange of about six letters, we hadn't written any more. I never thought I would hear from him again, but two months ago I found myself responding to a "Guess who this is?" game on the telephone. After naming about ten male names, all of which were wrong, my conversationalist gave in and shyly said, "It's me, David." My face began warming from embarrassment as my heart rapidly pumped heated blood. I laughed nervously and blurted "Hello!"

"I was looking through the Governor's School annual, saw your picture, and decided to call." David paused. "Your mother gave me your number at school."

"Are you calling from Boone?" I remembered David had said he wanted to go to Appalachian State University because of the computer department.

David quickly replied, "Yup, I'm up here in the cold. I study just to stay warm." We laughed loudly.

As we talked, we exchanged apologies and the reasons why we had lost touch, but that was all secondary through the chuckles of reminiscent stories. After our conversation had stretched past an hour, I finally said I needed to go.

"Well, listen, give me a call sometime. These mountains aren't like Durham. I bet you are always doing something."

"Mostly work. Homework that is. You know how these artists are," I laughed. David echoed the laugh. "Well, its been great hearing from you. I'll call you sometime."

I did call David; in fact I proceeded to call him every week. Then, after about three weeks we found ourselves calling each other almost every day. If something happened to me, my first urge was to call David. But although our friendship was becoming stronger, a telephone romance didn't seem feasible. After talking with our parents, we decided to see each other over Fall Break. David was traveling to Charleston, S.C. to visit his mother and stepfather so he arranged to stay at my house from 11:30 a.m. Saturday to 12:00 p.m. Sunday. But I had suddenly forgotten all these arrangements as I watched the Trailways bus marked Boone pull up to my feet. The bus driver jostled the door lever and the door opened, breaking the vacuum seal with a "Swumpt!"

I watched with hopeful eyes as each person unloaded the loud bus. A tall, blond, young man stepped off the bus and into my outstretched arms. I held him tightly, noticing his broadened shoulders. David stepped back as if to get another full view.

"You look great. Pretty." David smiled widely. "Prettier than I remembered."

I blushed, hoping the embarrassment went unnoticed

under my sunburned cheeks. Looking at the ground, I saw David's worn leather loafers and knobby knees. I brought my head back up, noticing the pizza stains on David's khaki shorts and navy tie.

"Lunch?", I asked, widening my eyes.

"No something to remember me by," David said with a French accent. With a flip of his hand, he tossed the tie over his shoulder like a long scarf and leaned towards my face. "Darling!", and with his exclamation I found myself in a backbend being kissed.

With my hand placed dramatically over my heart I retorted, "Now I'm sorry sir, but I'm not that kind of lady. Besides even if I were I'm waiting on a real gentleman."

"Yeah, well he got off the bus in Raleigh so I guess you'll just have to settle for me."

I laughed, raising my arms to the sky, "What did it do to deserve this?

David smiled warmly, "Must have been something real good."

As David picked up his black duffle bag marked "Go Apps!" I said, "I thought you might like to ride the ferry to Long Beach. I'm sure the sea air will do you some good. Get all the diesel out of your brain." David agreed.

The ferry was running late as it usually does after switching to the winter schedule. We sat in my VW convertible as I proceeded to tell him what islands we were passing by. As I pointed to the Bald Head Island Shoals, with the light sounds on the radio, the wind creating a new mold on my hair, David by my side, and the sun on our noses, God now I was home!

We pulled into the driveway and climbed out of the car. As we walked onto the lower deck of the two-story house, David said in a New Jersey accent, "Nice place you got here, Honey. Must have cost the old man a fortune. You sure your father is a doctor and not a man of, ah, personal loans?"

"I'm not sure," I replied as I opened the door. "Most of his associates love him so much they call him Godfather."

David stopped and snapped his fingers, "Dog gone it. I knew I forgot something. My black suit and white tie are at the cleaners. Do you think I'd have time to get another one?"

Touching his hand I calmly stated, "The birthday party for Grandfather won't be that formal. You can probably get by with just my black hat." I took the bowler hat off and put it on his head.

Then, after all preparations had been made for our nonchalant entrance, we discovered that no audience was on hand. Both disappointed and relieved, we laid down the duffle bag in the hall as I gave him a whirlwind tour.

Since we were both starving, we found ourselves drawn to the kitchen barstools without a word about food. Being the gourmet I am, I decided to serve Kraft macaroni and cheese, potato chips with left-over dip, and two of Mom's A&W root beers to wash down the food and long, hot drive. After lunch and some hours of relaxing, we decided to let someone know that we existed, so we were off to Grandma's beach house for some frisbee.

Grandma was in her kitchen fixin' pies for the party that night. She wrapped her doughy arms around my waist and put her head to my chest. The hugs were warm, but never too intimate; after all we are Germans. Sometime between the discussion of a haircut and Christmas presents, my Aunt Jean and Uncle Thomas strolled in holding Grandpa's birthday cake as gently as we hold new-born cousins. Judging from the inch-thick frosting and the scent of Grandma's pecan and apple pies, I knew this promised to be one more shot diet.

After playing frisbee in the wind, I concluded that jogging five miles would have been less exercise. As soon as David's final toss sacrificed the wobbling frisbee to the Atlantic, he shrugged his muscular shoulders and said, "Guess it wanted to swim."

I ran up to David and hugged him, smelling his freshly splashed Polo cologne. The light blue shorts he had changed into matched my sundress almost exactly. Looking at my hand he asked, "Can I hold that?"

"What?", I asked.

"That," he said as he looped his pale fingers through my tan ones. "How far is that lighthouse?" David questioned as he pointed to the eastern end of Oak Island.

"Too far for my body", I chuckled.

"Come on, come on, come on!" His persistence made the walk hard to resist so we ventured forward letting the sand mush under our toes.

"Do you miss Governor's School, David?"

David looked out at the ocean as if he were concentrating on a boat riding the horizon. "I miss you." He spoke softly.

I squeezed his hand. A wave crashed on my legs throwing water on my dress. "Remember when we met?", I asked.

"Let me see," David put his free hand on his chin pretending to be a detective, "The meeting took place during the fourth weekly water balloon fight, Thursday high noon. You were wearing a paint smock and I bombed you with five 'Dave Specials'."

"And if I remember correctly you said someone had tripped you," I said, nudging his ribs.

Clutching his chest, he shrieked, "What do you mean you were tripped? You, you did this on purpose!"

Shaking David's jaw lightly with my hand I retorted, "Oh yeah, well this little thing sure did fail you. Your jaw was moving, but only fractions of words came out."

"Didn't I take you to the masquerade that night?"

I nodded allowing the brown curls to slap my cheeks. "You were a pilot and I was Cleopatra." Looking out at a seagull and then back at David's face I said, "It's too bad we had to leave all that behind."

David stopped, placed his hands on my shoulders and whispered, "I'm here now. That summer can last if we are still friends." He began digging in the sand with his toes. "I've never met anyone like you." He started walking back towards the cottage. I followed him, listening intently. "I know we are far apart, but I don't have to travel the 300 miles to see your face." Then David placed my hand to his chest saying, "You're here Pam, always."

Not knowing how to respond, I glanced over my shoulder focusing on our long, grotesque shadows. The sun was low in the western sky so I knew the party would be beginning soon. Approaching the gray and white beach house, I grabbed David's hand and said, "Well, ready to do battle. Really my family are a group of characters."

David took an exaggerated deep breath and exhaled, "Well, let's go get mixed and mingled."

I pointed to the two men sitting on the porch. "The bald one is Grandpa, and the dark-haired man in my father."

David squinted at the men. "Your father doesn't look anything like a stuffy doctor—more like an old salt."

Walking onto the porch, I introduced David to Dad. After a firm handshake David remarked, "I can see where Pam gets her legs from." Dad laughed.

Grandpa hugged me with his weak arms. His speech had become slurry ever since the stroke, but David nodded as if every word was clear and understood. "So you're 83 years young!", David articulated loudly.

Grandpa mustered up a strong, "Yeaup."

Dad touched my shoulder and said, "Uncle Thomas is grilling the Mackeral downstairs. All the relatives are here." Turning to David, "Hope you like seafood. But even so there'll be plenty of cake."

David held my hand as we followed the father and son down the back stairs to the enclosed garage and loud voices. An aunt was talking to Mother when they noticed us. Mother waved her small hand as if to say, "Just a minute." The fading sunlight highlighted the soft gray sprinkled through Mother's sandy-brown hair.

"Well, you must be David. Hi, I'm Aunt Nan," she fluttered her thin hand.

David extended his hand. "Hi, I'm David Galliger. Good to meet you—"

"Well, well," my aunt said, touching my pearl choker, "Pam, the tomboy, is finally wearing pearls. I guess going to Duke has opened your eyes to the world of fashion."

"Aunt Nan is a personal shopper for some ladies in Greensboro," I said to David.

"Fabrics, fads, and fashion. That is the real industry of the world." She quickly slid one of her fingers into David's beltloops. "Say, are these Brooks Brother or L.L. Bean?"

Both stunned and embarrassed, David replied, "Actually I got these babies during a K-Mart blue light special." His humor didn't go over too well, because Aunt Nan pursed her lips, smoothed her boyish-cut hair, and trotted over to an unsuspecting guest.

"Good going, Dave," I said, "I've been wanting to say something like that since she married Uncle Charlie, but I am sure she'd get her revenge through some hideous Christmas gift."

The family was bustling around in the carport, but all became silent as my father said the blessing—or at least I think that is what he said. No one is ever quite sure because he always speaks like he is spitting out a bitten-off fingernail.

We moved closer to the food. Then I noticed David's face. He didn't seem too thrilled about the grilled Mackarel, but he took a piece anyway. As we ventured towards the 'Kiddie Table', I explained the procedure behind the seating arrangements. "The only way any of the grandchildren get to sit at the 'Big Table' is if one of the threes D's happens." David squinted his eyes. "Dead, divorced, or disowned," I explained. We laughed.

A cheerful clamor echoed off the cement as my older brother, J.K., walked in.

"Well, Kelley get a chair and eat all this food up," Grandma said. She knew he would eat. Ever since he was a little boy, when everyone called him Kelley, he would eat any of Grandma's cooking; that eating accounted for his size.

But he was muscular too; at 225 lbs. and 6'1", you've got to have something besides fat.

"J.K., come over here and meet my friend David," I called. J.K. walked over, sticking his chest out. Grinning with all his teeth he boomed, "Good to meet you David!" He fastened a tight grip on David's offered hand.

David's eyes screamed, "Mercy!", and he regretfully withdrew his now-limp hand. "Nice to meet you, too."

I glanced up and saw Mother coming over. Her face looked young for forty-five, with only a few charming laugh lines and a slight sagging at the corners of the mouth. After stooping to hug my shoulders, she extended her hand towards David.

"Hello, David, I'm Wendy, Pamela's mother," she said, smiling and eyeing him intently.

David swallowed a lump of food and stood up so quickly he almost knocked his chair over. "Pleased to meet you Mrs. Ward. I'm glad to finally talk to you in person instead of over the phone, trying to chase down Pam." Looking swiftly at me and then at Mother, David remarked, "I can see where Pam gets her lovely blue eyes."

"My eyes are green, David," I snapped. His schoolboy charm would not work on my mother, so I didn't feel badly about the remark.

With her lips twitching, Mother politely excused herself saying, "Well, pardon me, kids. I am going to check on the birthday cake. Make sure everything is spelt correctly."

Cautiously backing away, she turned her head. I know Mother was laughing at my remark to David. Having been a homecoming queen herself, she understood bogus charm.

After an off-key "Happy Birthday" led by Aunt Sherry, who is choir director at a country church, David got ready for some cake and conversation. He was talking to J.K. about skiing when my father started asking about computers.

"David, I was thinking about getting a system installed in the office. What would be my best investment?" Dad rubbed his potbellied stomach while David rambled on about disks and printers. I knew that Dad hated computers, that he was just trying to keep David talking. After a long five minutes of 'man talk', I walked back upstairs and sat on the steps. The ocean tumbled quietly, as the light, misty breeze began to chill my bare shoulders.

"Hey stranger, can I buy you a drink?" I dropped my head backwards and looked up at him. David touched my shoulder, causing even more goosebumps. "Mind if I sit down?" David proceeded to sit, saying, "Your family is a wonderful and warm group of people, but I'm afraid your father doesn't know a thing about computers."

I rested my head against his upper arm. My left cheek giggled as David began laughing to himself. "What?", I asked. David stopped laughing.

"What, What?", David questioned.

"What are you laughing for? Did my father say something to you about me? I leaned forward to look at David's face. He stared out at the ocean as if something fascinating were happening. Nudging his knee, David turned to me and crossed his eyes.

"David you're insane," I said, "but that's what I like the most about you." I kissed him. After a moonlit walk down the

beach, with David's serenade of Temptation melodies, throughout the "Doowap's" and "Oooooohh's", I began to realize how hard tomorrow's good-bye would be.

The next morning, my eyes opened to the high 10:30 sun. David was stirring about the house. After a quick shower, I put on a soft pink sundress, trying to look as pleasant as possible. Not being much of a morning person and since David had already eaten, I ate a grapefruit alone.

"How did you sleep last night?", I asked, while sitting down on the burgundy couch beside him.

"I think your Dobermans are in heat. Didn't you hear them?" David's face had a pink tint for the walk along the beach yesterday.

"Didn't hear a thing. I see you're all packed." I looked down so he couldn't see moisture building in my eyes. "We'd better get going."

David stood slowly, keeping his head lowered. I think he was crying. "Tell your parents I left a note on the dresser for them. I figured they wouldn't be back from church before I left." David picked up his bag and proceeded to the car. After grabbing the car keys off the counter, I checked my hair while passing by the hall mirror.

"Waterproof mascara, huh?" I mumbled to myself after seeing the smeared black under my reddening eyes.

Silence is all David and I shared as we drove through the heat to the noisy bus station. We had to decide if a long-distance relationship could work. After stopping at Terminal C, David kissed my cheek and whispered, "Good-bye." With bag in hand, he slipped out of the car like a loose page from my scrapbook. As I watched the Trailways through tearing eyes, David pointed to himself, put his hand over his heart, and pointed to me while disappearing in the diesel cloud.



Metamorphosis - Tammy Taylor

LORDS OF LIGHT/MORNING MAIDENS

Cindi Morgan

My morning glory vine
Restores radiance to my porch
Possessing essences I treasure
Without touching.

Splendor in blue
Trumpets of majesty
Sounding confident songs,
Brilliance upon every blossom.

Singing sunshine, dancing delicately
At the wind's lightest whisper,
They taunt and tease eager bees
Thirsty for nectar.

These pure morning maidens
Curtsy and bow purple
Into the vine
When the solar star reaches its pinnacle.
Making way for sister buds
To wake and sparkle
Tomorrow's morning
With their own glistening glory.



Metamorphosis - Kim Keeling

LOST SHEEP

Cindi Morgan

Street people sleeping
On sidewalks near steeples,
Prostitutes perched by houses
Of prayer.
Relics of children
Hearts unattended
Waiting for notice,
Some bread and some care.

BIRTH OF A COLT

Jennifer Strickland

Grass whispers as the easy breeze
floats between its blades.
Smells of oats, manure, and aged pine
linger about the stables.
Two brotherly bird-dogs recline
in the shade of a weeping willow
whose roots creep into a nearby pond.
Tufts of pollen sweep throughout,
drifting like a morning mist.
All waits.

Inside the stables
the three-year-old mare neighs.
New life arrives.

WISHING WELL

Karen Crutchfield

A penny falling
Hopes, prayers echo softly
Wishes in water.





Self-Portrait - Tammy Raynor

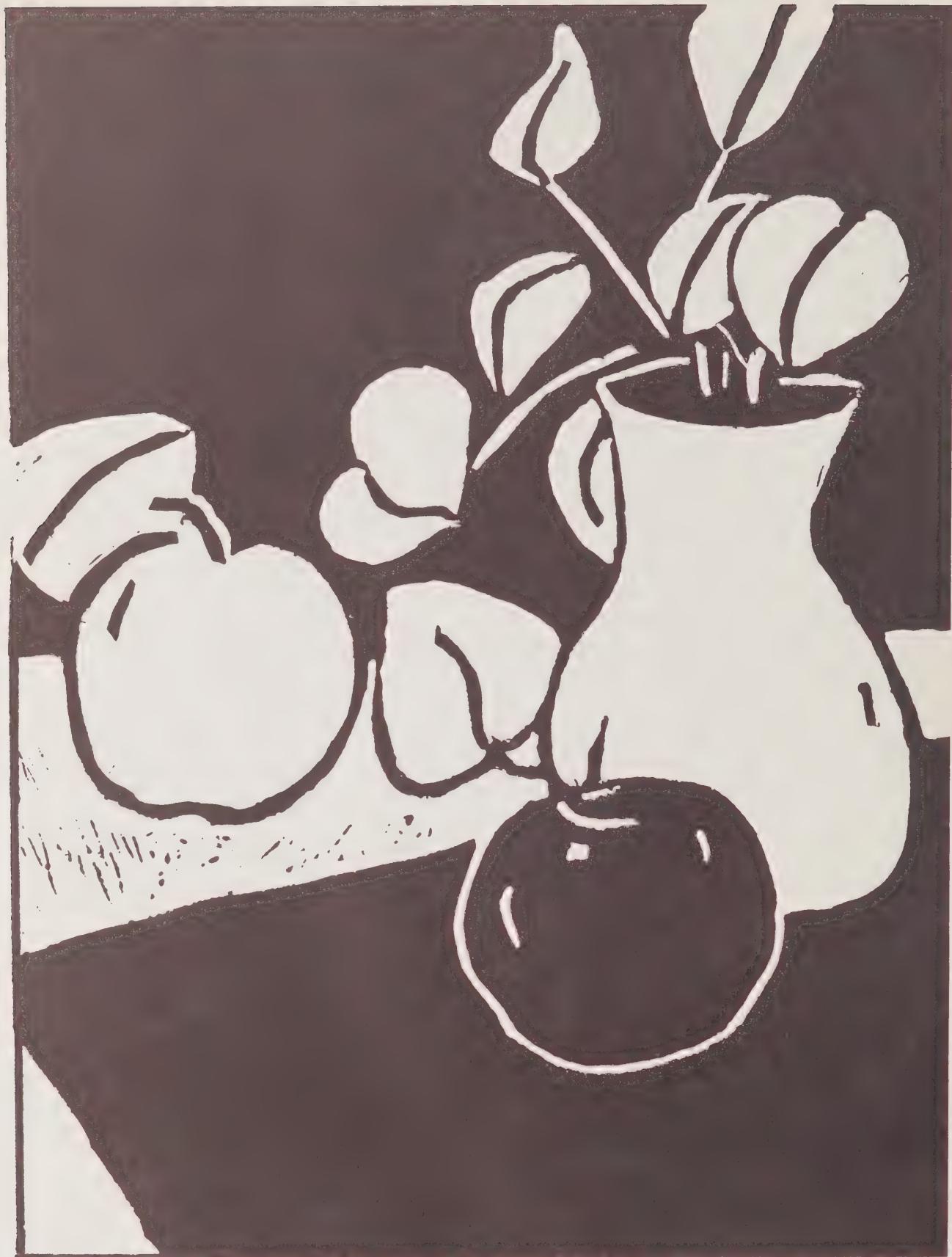
THE HUMAN ONES

Amy McLaughlin

Wet from morning rain
I huddle with my seedy straw sack,
Packed with my treasures:
Ragged pictures of Mama and Papa
Corners folding inward,
Their faces blurred by time.
Susie's stuffed dog, Barney —

I remember placing it in her crib,
Its chestnut fur with a creamy blue-velvet jacket —
Now jumbled in my sack,
Its brown-button eyes hanging by black thread.
Phillip's engraved silver tie clip
Now worn and tarnished,
The sparkle of our wedding morn faded from sight.
The leather family Bible
That once sat on top of our cherrywood piano —
Pages now crisp and crusty.
And in a plastic box, dried ivory carnations
From the funeral after the fire
That stole my children.

Lying on this concrete bed
I can barely remember fluffy cotton pillows,
Or the oak-wood steps
Leading to the elevated bed
Draped with a pink flowered bedspread.
My toes ache
From cold water seeping through
Crevices of my high-school suede loafers.
Around me rise skyscrapers
Streaming towards the clouds,
Each floor smaller as it rises.
Fluorescent lights glow through spotless windows,
People gushing together like water in a river.
Across the street,
Neon sign shouts "Pawn Shop!"
I squint to see the wedding china
That I sold last February,
Wrapped in a curtain of soot.
Two small mice play games beside me.
Not interested in petty games,
I watch feet pass constantly by.
Feet moving so fast,
Seeking for money, power, contentment.
The faces — stern, indifferent,
Glare straight ahead like those of programmed robots.
A little girl,
Long black hair loosely pulled back in a
Stiff pink bow,
Black shoes shimmering,
White-lace socks perking,
Stoops to ask if she can play a game with me.
I quickly glance up,
Noticing her curious, green eyes.
Her mother, looking back,
Eyes glaring,
Reaches out her hand and tightly clasps the child's arm,
Jerking her away.



THE FISH

Melanie Rae Bowen

"Sweetie! Sweetie! Are you awake?" I opened my eyes and groaned as I snuggled down a little deeper into the bed. The morning breeze off the Pamlico River was cold as it blew the curtains, which moved in synchronized rhythm with the waves that were lapping gently against the rocks. "Sweetie! Did you hear me?" I moaned one last time and answered, "Yes, Granddaddy, I'm up." As I climbed out of bed, I heard him open the refrigerator to get the orange juice out. I had always loved being at Pamlico Beach, in the family cottage, getting ready to go fishing with Granddaddy. Every year I looked forward to summer vacation because I spent at least one week with Granddaddy, during which we fished every day.

Click! I heard Granddaddy put the orange juice back in the refrigerator. I could see him sitting at the table, fingers clasped around his glass, staring absently out at the river. After nine years, I was an expert at jumping out of bed at five o'clock in the morning. I could even remember the most minute details of each of the fishing expeditions which we enjoyed together.

Running out of the bedroom, I nearly ran over Granddaddy in my haste to grab the big red bucket, the slimy bait, and the two Zebco fishing rods. I gave Granddaddy his rod and he smiled at me as we walked out the door. We strolled across the yard in silence, the wet dew thickly blanketing our shoes. "Looks like it's going to be a beautiful day, Sweetie." I never really understood how he could tell what the day would be like even before the sun came up, but I never doubted him because he was always right. We walked down the pier, Granddaddy in front and me behind. I was walking down the middle of the pier because I was scared that the pier would flip over if I walked too close to the edge. We put our gear down and settled into our usual places, going through the familiar motions mechanically as we daydreamed about the morning ahead.

"Sh!" Granddaddy whispered. "Don't talk or you will scare the fish." I slapped my leg and laughed, but I quickly quieted down when Granddaddy turned and looked at me. We sat on the old familiar pier, the once brown boards now white and aged, watching the sun climb step by step into the sky. The Pamlico River lay tranquil, gray in the early morning light, but I knew that before the sun met the horizon, the river would become a beautiful shade of blue, the shimmering blue of sapphires.

The most wonderful part of the early morning fishing trips were the stories Granddaddy told. Dressed immaculately in khaki trousers and shirt, his bald head gleaming like polished chrome in the early sunlight, Granddaddy told about his days as a naval doctor in Hawaii. Quietly, so as not to disturb the fish, he would say, "Back in 1941, when your mother was just a baby..." How I loved to hear those stories. I felt that I was in Hawaii beside him, battling to save the injured soldiers of World War II.

Sitting in the sunlight, I stared with anxious anticipation at my line, hoping that I, instead of Granddaddy, would be the first to catch a fish. The frozen shrimp began to thaw and the salt in which they were packed began to run toward my leg. As my line bobbed in the gently moving current, I gazed out at the river, absorbed in thoughts of the past. I remembered a previous fishing trip, one that was completely different from any of the others.

That morning had begun much the same as every other morning spent fishing on the pier. We had been out on the pier for almost three hours. I decided that I was hungry so I looked in the snack pail and pulled out a luscious chunk of watermelon. I laid my rod on the pier and sank my teeth into the juicy hunk of cold watermelon. I spotted a jellyfish floating lazily toward the pier so I decided that it would be a perfect target for my seeds. As it floated under the pier, I leaned over too far and I fell into the water on top of the jellyfish. Terrified at suddenly being in the water, I wrapped my legs around the closest piling, oblivious to the barnacles covering it, and screamed. After Granddaddy fished me out and inspected my cuts, he reprimanded me by telling me that I knew the water was not over my head and I could have avoided those potentially dangerous cuts.

Stunned and crushed by his reprimand, I retreated to the end of the pier to mull over this disastrous change in our relationship. A few minutes later, I heard his footsteps behind me. I refused to look up, but I could sense Granddaddy looking at me.

"Melanie, I want you to look at me and listen to what I'm about to say. I was not angry because you fell. I was only scared for your safety."

I looked up at Granddaddy and my eyes filled with tears. "I was upset because I thought you were mad at me and I thought I had disappointed you because I had done something bad."

I leaned toward him and he flashed one of his rare grins at me and...

"Melanie! Melanie! Pull in your line!"

About that time I felt a fierce tug on my rod and the nylon string was pulled taut. I reeled in the fish, slowly and smoothly, just as Granddaddy had taught me. Suddenly, its silvery-gray head emerged, gleaming in the sunlight. I pulled it up and turned toward Granddaddy, pride shining in my eyes. I had finally caught the first fish. Granddaddy reached out, took the fish off the hook and laid it in my bucket, where it flipped and flopped helplessly in the water.

When I looked up from the fish to my granddaddy, he smiled at me and I saw the glimmer of pride gleaming in his eyes. At that moment, I realized that Granddaddy was a real person, a person with feelings of joy and pain.

Yesterday morning, I packed my fishing gear and drove to the family cottage at Pamlico Beach. The only thing different about the old place is the ownership of the cottage; it now belongs to my uncle. When I arrived at the cottage, a little after five o'clock, I looked up at the early morning sky and I knew that the day would turn out to be beautiful, sunny and warm. As I walked through the kitchen, I could almost see Granddaddy sitting at the table drinking orange juice. Then I walked across the yard and down the pier, carefully so as not to turn the pier over. I reached the spot where Granddaddy and I used to fish those ten years ago and I rubbed my hand over the place where he used to sit. Looking through tear-filled eyes, I could actually see an indentation in the wood of the spot where Granddaddy had sat for so many years.

At that moment, I realized that I had lost one of the best friends I will ever have. But, I also realized that each memory I have is a gift from Granddaddy to me. Suddenly, the sun came out and gleamed down brightly as tears streamed down my cheeks. Granddaddy was right; you could predict how the day would turn out even before the sun came up.



Self-Portrait -
Jane Hill

Oriental Fans - Tammy Raynor

